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Understanding Visitor Motivations to a Wayside Chapel in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada

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Abstract

While academics that study religious tourism tend to focus on large-scale events and sites that attract thousands and millions of people, little has been written about small-scale sites that attract very few people but are still considered to be a part of religious tourism supply. This presentation focuses on a wayside chapel in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada. Located on the side of the Trans-Canada Highway (Highway 1), this wayside chapel is visited by hundreds of travelers a year who are passing through Brandon. An analysis of guestbook comments over a number of years highlights some of the reasons why people stop and visit this shrine, including curiosity, worship or prayer, a place to rest, and repeat visitation. In the guestbook, visitors commented on a wide variety of topics, including the aesthetics of the chapel; feelings of praise, worship, thankfulness, love for God and others; and pleas for help (e.g., "pray for me"). This case study highlights one of the different ways in which religious cater to the religious needs of people who are "on the move."

Key Words : religious tourism, wayside chapel, motivations, Canada